

# Building on Windows and Mirrors: Encouraging the Disruption of “Single Stories” Through Children’s Literature

CHRISTINA M. TSCHIDA, CAITLIN L. RYAN & ANNE SWENSON TICKNOR

Tschida, Ryan, and Ticknor combine conceptual tools to guide preservice teachers to make diverse and equitable choices in classroom literature selections.

**WHEN OUR MOSTLY WHITE**, middle class, female undergraduate preservice students enter our respective social studies, reading, and language arts methods courses, they usually have not yet been asked to think critically about the curriculum that they will be responsible for teaching to their future students and the implications for equity that arise as a result. Although we teach in different subject areas, we are all committed to guiding our students through this kind of critique, particularly as it relates to the images and messages that these future teachers will send their diverse elementary school pupils about themselves and the world around them. We also recognize that one of the primary conduits for sending these messages to students is through the children’s literature and other media included within their elementary school classrooms and libraries.

We know that we are not alone in facing this challenge. Scholars of children’s literature have long stressed the need for turning a critical eye to the stories we tell, who is doing the telling, and who gets left out (e.g., Bishop,

1990a; Dyson & Genishi, 1994; Fox & Short, 2003). Such scholars have defined multicultural literature (Harris, 1992; Hillard, 1995; Yokota, 1993), encouraged pre- and in-service teachers to become familiar with diverse titles (Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2007; Lazar & Offenber, 2011; Nathenson-Mejia & Escamilla, 2003; Swartz, 2003), and shared the power of exploring diverse texts with children (Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, & Johnson, 2007; DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006; Enciso, 2003; Jones, 2013; Ryan, Patraw, & Bednar, 2013; Souto-Manning, 2009; Tyson, 1999). In spite of these efforts, however, authors and illustrators representing diverse races, classes, religions, sexualities, abilities, and other areas of marginalization, when published at all (Cooperative Children’s Book Center, n.d.), are routinely left out of classrooms (American Library Association, 2009; McNair, 2008). This means that for most students in the United States, the literature they encounter in school consists mainly of White, middle class representations. Furthermore, some books that include particular cultural groups may be written from outsider perspectives and

therefore do not always represent a reality of those groups' lived experiences (Reese, 2007).

The question then becomes how to guide preservice teachers in considering the texts that are available and how to effectively mobilize those texts in their classrooms to create a more complex and authentic picture of the diverse lives of their students and the diverse world of us all. Book awards, multicultural booklists, and other reference materials are certainly a good start, but they do not provide preservice teachers with abstract, conceptual tools to help guide a continual questioning of the texts in their curricula and classrooms. In this article, we look at two particular lenses that have been helpful for motivating and guiding our students as they consider the need for and uses of diverse literature. The first, discussed by children's literature scholars for some time, is the idea of texts serving as windows and mirrors (Bishop, 1990a). A second, more recent contribution (that our students have found particularly helpful) is Adichie's (2009) warning about the dangers of the single story. Not only are both concepts useful when we work with our students, but we have also found that when brought together, they stretch and reinforce each other in productive ways that support our students' attempts at making their book selections more critical and equitable. In this article, we begin by discussing Bishop's concept of windows and mirrors and connecting it to Adichie's concept of the single story. We then illustrate how the recursive relationship we create between these two ideas provides a tool that supports our students as they learn to make text selections for their classrooms that provide more diverse representations for all of their students. Finally, to illustrate this point, we give examples of how we put these ideas into our teaching by sharing activities and groups of texts that we have used with our students to help them move beyond the single stories that they often hold of historical events, historical figures, and cultural narratives.

### Windows and Mirrors

When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part. (Bishop, 1990b, p. 557)

The concept of a book acting as a mirror implies that readers see something of themselves in the text. Such a book reflects back to readers portions of their identities, cultures, or experiences. When readers are able to find themselves in a text, they are therefore validated; their experiences are not so unique or strange as to never be

spoken or experienced by others. This inclusion, in turn, connects readers even more strongly to the larger world of books. The reality for many readers, however, is that they do not see reflections of themselves in children's literature. In 1965, Larrick drew attention to the fact that millions of "nonwhite children [were] learning to read and to understand the American way of life in books which either omit[ed] them entirely or scarcely mention[ed] them" (p. 63). For children from marginalized groups, this "near invisibility suggested that books and literature, while often pleasurable, were in some sense apart from them" (Bishop, 2012, p. 9). This disparity of mirrors in books also impacts readers who *do* see themselves; for if all children see are "reflections of themselves, they will grow up with an exaggerated sense of their own importance and value in the world—a dangerous ethnocentrism" (Bishop, 1990a, p. x).

To move readers beyond this ethnocentrism to view worlds that are not their own, books must also act as windows, allowing for a vicarious experience to supersede the limits of the readers' own lives and identities and spend time observing those of others. Children from marginalized cultural groups must have opportunities to see themselves reflected in literature, just as readers from all social/cultural groups must be given windows offering views of the world around them, not only imaginary worlds but also reality. These readers need books that show them their place in our multicultural world and teach them about the connections between all humans. Books are sometimes the only place where readers may meet people who are not like themselves, who offer alternative worldviews. What readers may find is that when the lighting is just right, a window can also be a mirror (Bishop, 1990a). Literature can transform human experience and reflect it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own lives as part of the larger human experience.

In recent years, literature has become a central component in curricula of elementary classrooms, making the question of what students read important. "Literature functions as a major socializing agent. It tells students who and what their society and culture values, what kinds of behaviors are acceptable and appropriate, and what it means to be a decent human being" (Bishop, 1990b, p. 561). For too long, readers from marginalized groups have found their search for self-affirmation in literature futile, and those who see only mirrors will "see no need for change; thus, current societal attitudes and wrongs [will remain] entrenched for yet another generation" (Bishop, 1990b, p. 561). For these reasons, Bishop argues, *all* readers need to experience both books that are mirrors for their own lives *and* books that are windows to the lives of others. The significance of

providing students with a host of books that represent both windows and mirrors cannot be more important in our world today.

#### Using Windows and Mirrors With Preservice Teachers

Because all “children have a right to books that reflect their own images and books that open less familiar worlds to them” (Bishop, 2012, p. 9), the implication for us as teacher educators is to help our students recognize literature’s role in this process and learn to evaluate books that can do such work for their future students. One way we help our students see how books can act as windows and mirrors for readers is through a self-analysis of the literature they have read. That means our students first need an understanding of culture. We ask them to consider how race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, social class, religion, geography, language, age, family structure, and so forth work to make them who they are. Our discussion centers on how unique we are in the ways that these aspects of our culture intersect to shape our identities. Once we have this base to build on, we ask them to make a list of books they remember reading when they were young. Next, we introduce Bishop’s concept of windows and mirrors, and in small groups, the students discuss how their list of books could be viewed through this lens. Students look for books that were mirrors and identify which parts of themselves were reflected in those books. They examine their list for books that acted as windows, opening them to new worldviews or people. One last, yet very important, step is having them identify the parts of their identity that they never saw represented in the literature they read as children. They are also able to hear from other students about what parts of their identities were never reflected back to them in this way. Our students begin to see the power of books and stories to send messages about who we are and where we belong.

This moves us nicely into sharing the power of literature, stories, and media to shape the way children see themselves. We have our students view a segment of the documentary *A Girl Like Me* (Reel Works Teen Filmmaking & Davis, 2005) where Kiri Davis repeats an experiment conducted in the 1940s in which Kenneth and Mamie Clark studied color preferences of African American children when selecting dolls to play with. When Davis repeated the experiment, 15 out of 21 children chose the White doll over the Black one, despite the fact that they were identical except for skin color. The children associated White with being “pretty” or “good” and Black with being “ugly” or “bad” in both experiments. Our students are sometimes uncomfortable with the reality of the video, but it becomes a powerful tool to begin a discussion on how

---

**We encourage our students to think about the messages they want to send to their students with and through books and how meaningful teaching with thoughtfully selected texts can help them expand and question these messages.**

---

images and representations in literature (or lack of them) shape children’s beliefs about who is good and who is bad, who counts and who does not, and whose experiences are deemed more important than others’. We encourage our students to think about the messages they want to send to their students with and through books and how meaningful teaching with thoughtfully selected texts can help them expand and question these messages.

#### The Danger of the Single Story

The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story. (Adichie, 2009, para. 24)

Novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie grew up in eastern Nigeria. During her 2009 TED Talk, she explained how she learned to read and write at an early age, modeling her stories after the characters and events she read about in the British and American books available to her in her home on a university campus. Through this reading, she formed what she calls a “single story” about books; namely, they were places where people like her and the communities in which she lived could not exist. It was only later, when Adichie discovered African books, that she recognized the limits this monocultural reading had on her sense of who could be included in literature. This realization caused her to experience a mental shift in her understanding of literature and its power. She explains in her talk, “Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person” (para. 19). Who decides which stories are told, who tells them, when are they told, and how are they told are all part of this power.

Adichie (2009) believes single stories are created when we show a people or an event as only one thing, over and over again, training us to see in this limited way. Over time, these single stories become so much a part of our lives that we are often unaware of the ways in which they operate. These stories then become commonsense narratives in our

thinking; they become the definitive way that we view a particular person, a group of people, or a set of circumstances, reducing that person or thing to a single perspective on who we think “they” are. It is only by disrupting single stories with narratives told from other perspectives that we form a more nuanced picture of the people, issues, or ideas at hand.

#### Using the Single Story With Preservice Teachers

To help students with this idea, we try to make students’ own single stories visible within our methods classrooms. For example, when asked to sketch what comes to mind when they hear the term *Native American* or *Indian*, the vast majority of our students struggle to produce anything other than a tepee, bows and arrows, feathers, drums, or maybe jewelry or a headband. After students have sketched and shared, we often ask them, “OK, so who drew an eighth-grade basketball player? Who drew a chemist? Who drew an accountant?” Only a few of our students, primarily those who are Native Americans themselves, have produced contemporary images that moved beyond the stereotypical portrayals. For the rest, the sequenced looks of confusion and then recognition that move across their faces indicate that they have seen their own single story in operation.

Once preservice teachers understand how single stories work in their own thinking, they can then critically examine the books they will use in their classrooms through this lens. They apply Adichie’s ideas, first by recognizing the single stories that circulate and then by thinking through how a range of additional books might create a gamut of perspectives that will complicate and disrupt those single stories. By using this lens, teachers are able to see that they do not need to give up entirely the kinds of understandings and stories that they may be most accustomed to. Rather, this perspective encourages them to recognize the limits of that more comfortable understanding and then add to those a multiplicity that results in a more nuanced and complex understanding of historical events, people, and situations. It is an additive model. When our students have the opportunity to consider, identify, and name those single stories of history or current cultural narratives, it helps them see the need for multiple and nonstereotypical stories. When scaffolded in this way, students begin to recognize the extensive areas where they have limited perspectives, and they acknowledge the need to disrupt their future students’

single stories in similar ways. We provide more specific examples of how this works with our students—and ways it could work with all teachers—in the sections to follow.

#### Combining These Two Lenses When Working With Students

While helping students understand that *one* story can never be the *only* story about historical events and people or cultural narratives, simply adding multiple perspectives to the books used within their classrooms is only part of the solution. In our work with preservice teachers, we find Bishop’s (1990a) idea of windows and mirrors and Adichie’s (2009) concept of single stories both helpful in guiding our students to think more critically about texts, but what we have come to see more recently is the recursive relationship between these two tools. Bishop’s idea of windows and mirrors provides an important first step that helps our students, and indeed all readers, begin to acknowledge the difference between self and others. By thinking about who traditionally experiences mirrors when reading and who tends to find only windows when they open a book, our mostly White, female, middle class students can see how their lives have been validated in ways that other readers with more marginalized identities do not get to experience. At the same time, our students with different backgrounds often find satisfaction in their more mainstream classmates’ dawning realizations as well as validation of their own feelings of marginalization within the children’s literature they remember from their elementary school days.

---

**When our students have the opportunity to consider, identify, and name those single stories of history or current cultural narratives, it helps them see the need for multiple and nonstereotypical stories.**

---

However, it is after we introduce Adichie’s (2009) concept of the single story that our students’ normative shared experiences finally get named. By focusing on multiplicity, all students’ stories are allowed to be layers within a larger, more complete narrative, not given primacy but still validated as real and important. In this way, expanding a single story means looking through many of Bishop’s (1990a) windows into many different “rooms” of experience. In other words, by bringing single stories to the concept of windows and mirrors, we are asking students to complicate the picture of the other and expand what gets seen. We ask them to look in greater, more complex detail at what it means to know and to know about an experience outside of

your own life. This is important for all readers to do, but it is especially important for our preservice teachers (not to mention children) in the majority culture so they cease being satisfied with stereotypical or universalized portraits of more marginalized groups.

One of the other things that the single story helps us do with our students is to move beyond a focus on individual identification, encouraged by windows and mirrors, and instead focus on the larger picture of the world we know around us. This is particularly helpful for texts other than contemporary realistic fiction that are used in classrooms, including historical fiction, informational texts, and primary source documents. An approach that allows reflection on this breadth of genres becomes particularly important in our era of the Common Core State Standards where students are encouraged to read a wide variety of nonfiction texts across content areas.

As students explore an expanded set of perspectives on a single topic through a variety of diverse texts, however, it remains important to reconsider the concept of windows and mirrors to highlight issues of power, voice, and equity. In the gamut of texts acting as diverse windows that teachers may add as a result of Adichie's (2009) advice, we still must consider which windows we can see through more easily, which windows are boarded up so we struggle to see what lies beyond, and which windows remain hard to find. Thus, it is not enough to simply offer multiple perspectives through additional texts; our students must be critical of the ways, even within multicultural literature, that single stories get taken up, circulated, reinforced, resisted, or challenged. They still must ask who is being reflected and who is being learned about in this new, expanded set of texts, as well as what the effects of these arrangements might be for individual readers. This helps move the additive model away from simple relativism where all stories are equal and instead invites a critical examination of the sources of those different stories and the implications for their circulation among readers.

This critical examination of perspective is especially important in content areas such as social studies where historical events and figures take on mythic status and where a few surface facts often stand in as common sense for the complete historical record. In these cases, using diverse and authentic children's literature to disrupt the single story infused with the critical reflection encouraged by windows and mirrors is essential in fostering critical approaches and deeper understanding of this set of diverse perspectives. Three examples we use in our work with preservice teachers follow.

### Christopher Columbus: Hero, Villain, or Both?

When we (Christina and Caitlin) ask our preservice teachers what they know about Columbus, we predictably hear the words "In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue" or some vague references to the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. Most of our students remember little about Columbus other than his "discovery" of America. A few might challenge whether someone can actually discover a place where people had already been living for thousands of years, and someone may even quietly voice the idea that Columbus was rather forceful or cruel in his treatment of the native people he encountered, but these situations remain rare. Our work when dealing with topics such as Columbus and the "discovery" of America, then, means helping our students develop a deeper understanding of the consequences of European conquest in the Western hemisphere and expand the single story that so many of them hold of this time period and the historical figures involved.

Because historical events are typically written about in informational texts, historical fiction, or primary source documents, students are less likely to find the lens of windows and mirrors a good starting point for understanding issues of power and voice. Instead, we begin with the lens of the single story. We juxtapose select passages from Stephen Krensky's (1991) *Christopher Columbus* with sections of *Encounter* by Jane Yolen (1996). Students are able to compare the single story of Columbus presented in Krensky's biography with the same historical events as recounted by a fictional Taíno Indian child from the island of San Salvador in Yolen's text. When seeing these text excerpts from each book side by side, our students are struck by the limited single story that they have of Columbus. Some even begin questioning why they never before heard (or even thought about!) the perspectives of the other people involved. Having a second story finally makes visible the partial, constrained nature of what had previously passed as the "real" story, often for the first time.

To further complicate their dissonance, we continue to discuss authorship and representation in these various stories. We talk about how Yolen, a White woman, used primary source information to construct her fictionalized account of the event from the point of view of the Taíno people, and we discuss the implications of this event being told from the perspective of an outsider. That leads us to consider whose voices are not heard in these two texts. Specifically, our students begin to realize that even with these expanded stories, they have not heard from the perspective of any indigenous people. This is when we introduce the book *A Coyote Columbus Story* by Thomas

King (2002), a Native American author and scholar born to a Cherokee father and a mother of Greek and German descent. Reading this book along with scholarship on Native American literature by Native American scholars (Seale & Slapin, 2005) allows us to discuss the finer points of what an authentic representation brings to and what outsider representations distort in the stories we share. Therefore, our discussion of this historical event, which our students assumed they knew well, moves from confusion and disillusionment to insight and understanding, and then eventually to recognition of the power of texts to not only shape the story of a historical event or a people but also, in the process, to marginalize others through a particular telling of that story. In this case, we argue that it is necessary but not sufficient to simply add diverse perspectives through multiple texts; we must then reexamine these multiple texts with Bishop's (1990a) windows and mirrors to see which windows are missing or which mirrors may be reflecting distorted images. (See Table 1 for particular titles.)

#### Was Rosa Parks Really Just Tired?

Like most American students, my (Christina's) students come to their elementary social studies methods course able to identify a few key players in the Civil Rights Movement. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks remain at the top of the list. Students insist that they know a great deal about these historical figures from the repeated attention to their stories in public school curricula, especially during Black History Month. When asked to write what they know about Rosa Parks, however, they continually lock her into a single story as the "bus woman" who would not move because she was tired from a long day of work. In their accounts, she was a sweet, older lady who was arrested after she refused to give up her seat to a White person because she realized that she should have rights, too. What they understand as a spontaneous act of courage then sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott. When presented with primary source documents, such as the famous photo of her being fingerprinted, her arrest record, and excerpts from her biography or interviews, my students must reconcile their single story with additional facts. These texts explain, for example, that at the time of her arrest, Parks was only 42, she had had a previous run-in with the same bus driver 13 years earlier, she was only one of several Black women in Montgomery to be arrested for violating the segregated busing policy in 1955, she had been attending antisegregation workshops for several years prior to her arrest, and she had been working closely with other activists to bring this discriminatory situation to a head. With this new information, students frequently express frustration with the version of the story that they learned in school. They

feel robbed of knowing what they now consider the truth about this historical figure and the events of this pivotal moment in the Civil Rights Movement.

By adding additional texts, such as biographies from different perspectives, her own words, and primary source documents, my students come to see that the story of Rosa Parks is really a story about the activism of the African American people of Montgomery, Alabama, and their courageous, community-based struggle. (See Table 1 for particular titles.) This does not mean that we diminish the bravery of Parks as an individual movement leader; "it places her, however, in the midst of a consciously planned movement for social change" (Kohl, 2007, p. 171). When her story is expanded to one of a social movement and a community's refusal to be moved, it becomes possible to see mirrorlike connections to many different communities and movements. It also becomes possible to consider who might be invested in the perpetuation of the more limited single story and who benefits from its continual circulation.

#### Who Makes a Family?

In addition to narratives about historical figures and events, we also carry single stories about cultural narratives. These relate to the way the world works or how things are "supposed" to be. These kinds of stories tell students who they are and who they should be; these stories make some ways of being in the world more acceptable and others less so. They provide a very limited set of mirrors and windows. Therefore, they have powerful consequences for how children feel about themselves and how they operate in the world around them. One way we learn about these kinds of single stories is through the narratives we read in fairy tales. In my (Anne's) elementary language arts methods course, I explore this idea with my students. First, I read aloud a traditional, mainstream American version of Cinderella, such as *Cinderella* by Kinoku Craft (2000) and then ask my students to construct a story map of the literary elements. They easily talk about how kindhearted, beautiful Cinderella lived with a wicked stepmother and mean stepsisters before being rescued by a handsome prince to live happily ever after. This is their single story of this tale. Then, I hand out several additional picture books that are other versions of this Cinderella story. (See Table 2 for particular titles.) I ask them to read these and construct another story map to compare and contrast against the first Cinderella text. Quickly, students realize that the second text they are reading is not the "traditional" tale in terms of theme, characters, perspectives, cultural elements, or a happy ending. With the addition of multiple texts, my students start to understand how other versions of the story are possible and how these

TABLE 1

## Texts we use to disrupt historical single stories

Single Story	Books	Online Sources
<p><b>Christopher Columbus and European conquest in the Western hemisphere</b></p>	<p>King, T. (2002). <i>A Coyote Columbus story</i>. (W.K. Monkman, Illus.). Toronto, ON, Canada: Groundwood.</p> <p>Krensky, S. (1991). <i>Christopher Columbus</i>. (N. Green, Illus.). New York, NY: Random House.</p> <p>Littlechild, G. (2003). <i>This land is my land</i>. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.</p> <p>Yolen, J. (1996). <i>Encounter</i>. (D. Shannon, Illus.). San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace.</p> <p>Zinn, H. (2007). <i>A young people's history of the United States: Vol. 1. Columbus to the Spanish–American War</i>. New York, NY: Seven Stories.</p>	<p>McGrath, S. (2013). <i>The truth about Christopher Columbus and America</i> [Web log post]. Retrieved from <a href="http://suite101.com/a/the-truth-about-christopher-columbus-and-america-a157365">http://suite101.com/a/the-truth-about-christopher-columbus-and-america-a157365</a></p> <p>Minster, C. (2013). <i>The truth about Christopher Columbus</i>. Retrieved from <a href="http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/thevoyagesofcolumbus/a/09columbustruth.htm">http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/thevoyagesofcolumbus/a/09columbustruth.htm</a></p> <p>Primary source documents, such as journal entries from Columbus or his letter to the King and Queen of Spain at <a href="http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/columbus1.asp">http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/columbus1.asp</a> and <a href="http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/columbus2.asp">http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/columbus2.asp</a></p>
<p><b>Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement</b></p>	<p>Brinkley, D. (2000). <i>Rosa Parks: A life</i>. New York, NY: Penguin.</p> <p>Celsi, T. (1991). <i>Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott</i>. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook.</p> <p>Giovanni, N. (2005). <i>Rosa</i>. (B. Collier, Illus.). New York, NY: Henry Holt.</p> <p>Kohl, H. (2007). The politics of children's literature: What's wrong with the Rosa Parks myth? In W. Au, B. Bigelow, &amp; S. Karp (Eds.), <i>Rethinking our classrooms: Vol. 1. Teaching for equity and justice</i> (Rev. ed., pp. 168–171). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.</p> <p>Nobleman, M.T. (2002). <i>Rosa Parks</i>. Milwaukee, WI: World Almanac Library.</p> <p>Parks, R. (with Haskins, J.). (1992). <i>Rosa Parks: My story</i>. New York, NY: Dial.</p> <p>Parks, R. (with Reed, G.J.). (1996). <i>Dear Mrs. Parks: A dialogue with today's youth</i>. New York, NY: Lee &amp; Low.</p> <p>Reynolds, A. (2010). <i>Back of the bus</i>. (F. Cooper, Illus.). New York, NY: Philomel.</p> <p>Ringgold, F. (1999). <i>If a bus could talk: The story of Rosa Parks</i>. New York, NY: Simon &amp; Schuster.</p>	<p>Primary source documents, such as her arrest record, letters, and photographs found at <a href="http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/rosa-parks">http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/rosa-parks</a> and <a href="http://www.loc.gov/index.html">http://www.loc.gov/index.html</a></p>

TABLE 2

## Texts we use to disrupt cultural narratives

Cinderella Example	Family Example
<p>Climo, S. (1996). <i>The Irish cinderlad</i>. (L. Krupinski, Illus.). New York, NY: Harper-Trophy.</p>	<p>Boelts, M. (2007). <i>Those shoes</i>. (N.Z. Jones, Illus.). Somerville, MA: Candlewick.</p>
<p>Cole, B. (1987). <i>Prince Cinders</i>. New York, NY: Putnam &amp; Grosset.</p>	<p>Bunting, E. (1991). <i>Fly away home</i>. (R. Himler, Illus.). New York, NY: Clarion.</p>
<p>Hickox, R. (1998). <i>The golden sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella story</i>. (W. Hillenbrand, Illus.). New York, NY: Holiday House.</p>	<p>Bunting, E. (1994). <i>Smoky night</i>. (D. Diaz, Illus.). San Diego, CA: Voyager.</p>
<p>Jackson, E. (1994). <i>Cinder Edna</i>. (K. O'Malley, Illus.). New York, NY: Lothrop, Lee &amp; Shepard.</p>	<p>Cohn, D. (2002). <i>¡Si, se puede! Yes, we can!</i> (F. Delgado, Illus.). El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos.</p>
<p>Johnston, T. (1998). <i>Bigfoot Cinderrrrrella</i>. (J. Warhola, Illus.). New York, NY: Puffin.</p>	<p>Cooper, M. (1998). <i>Gettin' through Thursday</i>. (N. Bennett, Illus.). New York, NY: Lee &amp; Low.</p>
<p>Louie, A.-L. (1982). <i>Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella story from China</i>. (E. Young, Illus.). New York, NY: Puffin.</p>	<p>Cottin, M. (2006). <i>The black book of colors</i>. (R. Faría, Illus.; E. Amado, Trans.). Berkeley, CA: Greenwood.</p>
<p>Lowell, S. (2000). <i>Cindy Ellen: A wild Western Cinderella</i>. (J. Manning, Illus.). New York, NY: Joanna Cotler.</p>	<p>de Haan, L., &amp; Nijland, S. (2000). <i>King and king</i>. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle.</p>
<p>Martin, R. (1992). <i>The rough-face girl</i>. (D. Shannon, Illus.). New York, NY: Putnam &amp; Grosset.</p>	<p>Elwin, R., &amp; Pause, M. (1990). <i>Asha's mums</i>. (D. Lee, Illus.). Toronto, ON, Canada: Three O'Clock Press.</p>
<p>Minters, F. (1994). <i>Cinder-Elly</i>. (G.B. Karas, Illus.). New York, NY: Puffin.</p>	<p>González, R. (2005). <i>Antonio's card/La tarjeta de Antonio</i>. (C.C. Álvarez, Illus.). San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.</p>
<p>San Souci, R.D. (1998). <i>Cendrillon: A Caribbean Cinderella</i>. (B. Pinkney, Illus.). New York, NY: Simon &amp; Schuster.</p>	<p>Hazen, B.S. (1979). <i>Tight times</i>. (T.S. Hyman, Illus.). New York, NY: Puffin.</p>
<p>San Souci, R.D. (2009). <i>Cinderella skeleton</i>. (D. Catrow, Illus.). Orlando, FL: Harcourt.</p>	<p>Heide, F.P., &amp; Gilliland, J.H. (1990). <i>The day of Ahmed's secret</i>. (T. Lewin, Illus.). New York, NY: Lothrop, Lee &amp; Shepard.</p>
<p>Schroeder, A. (1997). <i>Smoky Mountain Rose: An Appalachian Cinderella</i>. (B.D. Sneed, Illus.). New York, NY: Puffin.</p>	<p>Kilodavis, C. (2011). <i>My princess boy: A mom's story about a young boy who loves to dress up</i>. (S. DeSimone, Illus.). New York, NY: Aladdin.</p>
<p>Shaskan, T.S. (2012). <i>Seriously, Cinderella is so annoying! The story of Cinderella as told by the wicked stepmother</i>. (G. Guerlais, Illus.). Mankato, MN: Picture Window.</p>	<p>Parr, T. (2003). <i>The family book</i>. New York, NY: Little, Brown.</p>
	<p>Parr, T. (2007). <i>We belong together: A book about adoption and families</i>. New York, NY: Little, Brown.</p>
	<p>Pérez, A.I. (2000). <i>My very own room/Mi propio cuartito</i>. (M.C. Gonzalez, Illus.). San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.</p>
	<p>Polacco, P. (2009). <i>In our mothers' house</i>. New York, NY: Philomel.</p>
	<p>Richardson, J., &amp; Parnell, P. (2005). <i>And Tango makes three</i>. (H. Cole, Illus.). New York, NY: Simon &amp; Schuster.</p>
	<p>Williams, V.B. (1982). <i>A chair for my mother</i>. New York, NY: Greenwillow.</p>
	<p>Woodson, J. (2002). <i>Our Gracie aunt</i>. (J.J. Muth, Illus.). New York, NY: Hyperion.</p>
	<p>Woodson, J. (2002). <i>Visiting day</i>. (J.E. Ransome, Illus.). New York, NY: Scholastic.</p>



other versions represent additional windows and mirrors by showing ways of living in the world that are left out of the more traditional tale.

Yet, cultural narratives are perpetuated by much more than just fairy tales. When thinking about children's real lives as represented in realistic fiction, single stories about a range of experiences are fairly common. For example, the limited single story of what "family" is becomes readily apparent when disrupted by using the tools of windows and mirrors and then expanded through the addition of multiple perspectives. To do this, I first ask my students to read common and popular picture books with main characters who have a traditional family structure of mom, dad, siblings, and dog. We discuss how the families represented in the text are similar to or different from their own families. Many students share that they saw their families reflected in the text, whereas other students share that their families were not represented and give counterexamples of how their families include stepparents, additional siblings, and/or adoptions. Next, I ask students to read picture books with main characters who have much more diverse family structures, including same-gender parents, single parents, adopted children, and grandparents. By first noticing the ways the more common single story of family circulates, by questioning who is represented in those texts and who is left out, and by adding layers of family structures represented in more diverse children's books, the single story of "family" is disrupted and expanded. (See Table 2 for particular titles.) Such a method can even be used for cultural narratives outside of families. In this way, we have explored ideas such as immigration, perspectives on labor, conflict and war, poverty and class, and disabilities.

### Conclusion

We are committed to providing our preservice teachers with conceptual tools that will guide them to make diverse and equitable choices in the literature they have on the bookshelves in their classrooms and the texts they use in their teaching. Such practices assure that all readers have access to windows and mirrors, thereby helping create the kinds of classrooms that all children deserve. By guiding our preservice teacher students through a process using common single stories that they hold, we are able to ensure their ability to do such work in their own classrooms. Using windows and mirrors to

first highlight the power of being included or excluded from the representations around you, adding the single story concept to name the reductive and limited stories of historical events, people, or cultural narratives, and expanding these with multiple layers of diverse perspectives seems to be a particularly helpful process because it allows our students to apply this conceptual tool to a wide range of areas. This includes texts across a variety of content areas and a range of genres.

Another advantage of combining these tools is that it becomes less intimidating for our students to revisit the expanded text set through the lens of windows and mirrors with issues of equity in mind to examine it for issues of power. The combination of these tools, therefore, is nonthreatening and yet still critical, a balance that is important for our mostly White, female, middle class students to have. The additive model of the single story frame helps make issues of text selection accessible and practical, while the critical layer helps their selections remain accountable. This second step adds an element of social justice to their process because it helps them think about individual experiences of people around the world who are inequitably positioned relative to one another (Ticknor, 2012). Importantly, our students also find this multistep process empowering because they truly want to better serve their diverse students; they are just not always sure how best to do so. After these experiences in their preservice teacher program, they trust that these lenses give them tools they can use to be better teachers. They often leave our classes saying that reading and teaching a more diverse set of children's literature is the thing they are most excited to do in their own classrooms.

For us as well as for our students, it may seem much easier to maintain our single stories, keeping them on a shelf neat and organized, but that perpetuates stereotypes and marginalizes the lived experiences of those who do not find characters like themselves in books, who do not have a voice in how (or whose) history is told, and who wonder why they do not fit in the stories they hear in school. The work required of teachers in our diverse society involves taking those single stories down off the shelf, adding to them a range of other stories that make historical events, people, and cultural narratives messy, more complex, and more validating to *all* students. ■

*Christina M. Tschida* is an assistant professor in the Department of Elementary Education and Middle Grades Education at East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, where she teaches social studies methods and curriculum planning courses. Her research interests include online teaching and learning, social studies instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and issues of preservice teacher identity. email: [tschidac@ecu.edu](mailto:tschidac@ecu.edu)

*Caitlin L. Ryan* is an assistant professor in the Department of Literacy Studies, English Education, and History Education at East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, where she teaches undergraduate reading methods courses. Her research investigates relationships among

children's literature, literacy, social positioning, and educational equity in elementary schools, particularly in relation to issues of gender and sexuality. email: [ryanca@ecu.edu](mailto:ryanca@ecu.edu)

*Anne Swenson Ticknor* is an assistant professor in the Department of Literacy Studies, English Education, and History Education at East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina. She teaches literacy methods courses for undergraduate students and literacy courses for graduate students in the Reading Education program. Her research focuses on literacy practices related to identity of preservice elementary literacy teachers. email: [ticknora@ecu.edu](mailto:ticknora@ecu.edu)

## References

- Adichie, C.N. (2009). *The danger of a single story* [Video speech]. Retrieved from [http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html)
- American Library Association. (2009). *Attempts to remove children's book on male penguin couple parenting chick continue*. <http://www.ala.org/ala/newspresscenter/news/pressreleases2009/april2009/nlw08bbtopten.cfm>
- Bishop, R.S. (1990a). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives*, 6(3), ix–xi.
- Bishop, R.S. (1990b). Walk tall in the world: African American literature for today's children. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 59(4), 556–565.
- Bishop, R.S. (2012). Reflections on the development of African American children's literature. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 38(2), 5–13.
- Cooperative Children's Book Center. (n.d.). *Children's books by and about people of color published in the United States: Statistics gathered by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin–Madison*. Retrieved from <http://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp>
- Copenhaver-Johnson, J.F., Bowman, J.T., & Johnson, A.C. (2007). Santa stories: Children's inquiry about race during picturebook read-alouds. *Language Arts*, 84(3), 234–244.
- DeNicolò, C.P., & Franquiz, M.E. (2006). "Do I have to say it?": Critical encounters with multicultural children's literature. *Language Arts*, 84(2), 157–170.
- Dyson, A.H., & Genishi, C. (Eds.). (1994). *The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Enciso, P.E. (2003). Reading discrimination. In S. Greene & D. Abt-Perkins (Eds.), *Making race visible: Literacy research for cultural understanding* (pp. 149–177). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Fox, D.L., & Short, K.G. (2003). *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Harris, V.J. (Ed.). (1992). *Teaching multicultural literature in grades K–8*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Hefflin, B.R., & Barksdale-Ladd, M.A. (2001). African American children's literature that helps students find themselves: Selection guidelines for grades K–3. *The Reading Teacher*, 54(8), 810–819.
- Hermann-Wilmarth, J.M. (2007). Full inclusion: Understanding the role of gay and lesbian texts and films in teacher education classrooms. *Language Arts*, 84(4), 347–356.
- Hillard, L.L. (1995). Defining the "multi-" in "multicultural" through children's literature. *The Reading Teacher*, 48(8), 728–729.
- Jones, S. (2013). Critical literacies in the making: Social class and identities in the early reading classroom. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 13(2), 197–224.
- Kohl, H. (2007). The politics of children's literature: What's wrong with the Rosa Parks myth? In W. Au, B. Bigelow, & S. Karp (Eds.), *Rethinking our classrooms: Vol. 1. Teaching for equity and justice* (Rev. ed., pp. 168–171). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.
- Larrick, N. (1965, September 11). The all-White world of children's books. *The Saturday Review*, pp. 63–65, 84.
- Lazar, A., & Offenber, R. (2011). Activists, allies, and racists: Helping teachers address racism through picture books. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 43(3), 275–313.
- McGrath, S. (2013, December 3). *The truth about Christopher Columbus and America* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://suite101.com/a/the-truth-about-christopher-columbus-and-america-a157365>
- McNair, J.C. (2008). The representation of authors and illustrators of color in school-based book clubs. *Language Arts*, 85(3), 193–201.
- Minster, C. (2013). *The truth about Christopher Columbus*. Retrieved from <http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/thevoyagesofcolumbus/a/09columbustruth.htm>
- Nathenson-Mejia, S., & Escamilla, K. (2003). Connecting with Latino children: Bridging cultural gaps with children's literature. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 27(1), 101–116.
- Reel Works Teen Filmmaking (Producer), & Davis, K. (Director). (2005). *A girl like me* [Documentary]. United States: Media That Matters.
- Reese, D. (2007). Proceed with caution: Using Native American folktales in the classroom. *Language Arts*, 84(3), 245–256.
- Ryan, C.L., Patraw, J.M., & Bednar, M. (2013). Discussing princess

## References Continued

- boys and pregnant men: Teaching about gender diversity and transgender experiences within an elementary school curriculum. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 10(1/2), 83–105.
- Seale, D., & Slapin, B. (Eds.). (2005). *A broken flute: The native experience in books for children*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira; Berkeley, CA: Oyate.
- Souto-Manning, M. (2009). Negotiating culturally responsive pedagogy through multicultural children's literature: Towards critical democratic literacy practices in a first grade classroom. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 9(1) 50–74.
- Swartz, P.C. (2003). Bridging multicultural education: Bringing sexual orientation into the children's and young adult literature classrooms. *The Radical Teacher*, 66(Spring), 11–16.
- Ticknor, A. (2012). "What would Jones say?": Texts as community members. *Literacy and Social Responsibility eJournal*, 5(12), 137–157.
- Tyson, C.A. (1999). "Shut my mouth wide open": Realistic fiction and social action. *Theory Into Practice*, 38(3), 155–159.
- Yokota, J. (1993). Issues in selecting multicultural children's literature. *Language Arts*, 70(3), 156–167.
- Boelts, M. (2007). *Those shoes*. (N.Z. Jones, Illus.). Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- Brinkley, D. (2000). *Rosa Parks: A life*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Bunting, E. (1991). *Fly away home*. (R. Himler, Illus.). New York, NY: Clarion.
- Bunting, E. (1994). *Smoky night*. (D. Diaz, Illus.). San Diego, CA: Voyager.
- Celsi, T. (1991). *Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott*. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook.
- Climo, S. (1996). *The Irish cinderlad*. (L. Krupinski, Illus.). New York, NY: HarperTrophy.
- Cohn, D. (2002). *¡Si, se puede! / Yes, we can!* (F. Delgado, Illus.). El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos.
- Cole, B. (1987). *Prince Cinders*. New York, NY: Putnam & Grosset.
- Cooper, M. (1998). *Gettin' through Thursday*. (N. Bennett, Illus.). New York, NY: Lee & Low.
- Cottin, M. (2006). *The black book of colors*. (R. Faría, Illus.; E. Amado, Trans.). Berkeley, CA: Groundwood.
- Craft, K.Y. (2000). *Cinderella*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle.
- de Haan, L., & Nijland, S. (2000). *King and king*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle.
- Elwin, R., & Paulse, M. (1990). *Asha's mums*. (D. Lee, Illus.). Toronto, ON, Canada: Three O'Clock Press.
- Giovanni, N. (2005). *Rosa*. (B. Collier, Illus.). New York, NY: Henry Holt.
- González, R. (2005). *Antonio's card / La tarjeta de Antonio*. (C.C. Álvarez, Illus.). San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.
- Hazen, B.S. (1979). *Tight times*. (T.S. Hyman, Illus.). New York, NY: Puffin.
- Heide, F.P., & Gilliland, J.H. (1990). *The day of Ahmed's secret*. (T. Lewin, Illus.). New York, NY: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.
- Hickox, R. (1998). *The golden sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella story*. (W. Hillenbrand, Illus.). New York, NY: Holiday House.
- Jackson, E. (1994). *Cinder Edna*. (K. O'Malley, Illus.). New York, NY: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.
- Johnston, T. (1998). *Bigfoot Cinderrrrrella*. (J. Warhola, Illus.). New York, NY: Puffin.
- Kilodavis, C. (2011). *My princess boy: A mom's story about a young boy who loves to dress up*. (S. DeSimone, Illus.). New York, NY: Aladdin.
- King, T. (2002). *A Coyote Columbus story*. (W.K. Monkman, Illus.). Toronto, ON, Canada: Groundwood.
- Krensky, S. (1991). *Christopher Columbus*. (N. Green, Illus.). New York, NY: Random House.
- Littlechild, G. (2003). *This land is my land*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.
- Louie, A.-L. (1982). *Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella story from China*. (E. Young, Illus.). New York, NY: Puffin.
- Lowell, S. (2000). *Cindy Ellen: A wild Western Cinderella*. (J. Manning, Illus.). New York, NY: Joanna Cotler.
- Martin, R. (1992). *The rough-face girl*. (D. Shannon, Illus.). New York, NY: Putnam & Grosset.
- Minters, F. (1994). *Cinder-Elly*. (G.B. Karas, Illus.). New York, NY: Puffin.
- Nobleman, M.T. (2002). *Rosa Parks*. Milwaukee, WI: World Almanac Library.
- Parks, R. (with Haskins, J.). (1992). *Rosa Parks: My story*. New York, NY: Dial.
- Parks, R. (with Reed, G.J.). (1996). *Dear Mrs. Parks: A dialogue with today's youth*. New York, NY: Lee & Low.
- Parr, T. (2003). *The family book*. New York, NY: Little, Brown.
- Parr, T. (2007). *We belong together: A book about adoption and families*. New York, NY: Little, Brown.
- Pérez, A.I. (2000). *My very own room / Mi propio cuartito*. (M.C. Gonzalez, Illus.). San Francisco, CA: Children's.
- Polacco, P. (2009). *In our mothers' house*. New York, NY: Philomel.
- Reynolds, A. (2010). *Back of the bus*. (F. Cooper, Illus.). New York, NY: Philomel.
- Richardson, J., & Parnell, P. (2005). *And Tango makes three*. (H. Cole, Illus.). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Ringgold, F. (1999). *If a bus could talk: The story of Rosa Parks*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

## Children's Literature Cited Continued

- San Souci, R.D. (1998). *Cendrillon: A Caribbean Cinderella*. (B. Pinkney, Illus.). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- San Souci, R.D. (2009). *Cinderella skeleton*. (D. Catrow, Illus.). Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Schroeder, A. (1997). *Smoky Mountain Rose: An Appalachian Cinderella*. (B.D. Sneed, Illus.). New York, NY: Puffin.
- Shaskan, T.S. (2012). *Seriously, Cinderella is so annoying! The story of Cinderella as told by the wicked stepmother*. (G. Guerlais, Illus.). Mankato, MN: Picture Window.
- Williams, V.B. (2007). *A chair for my mother*. New York, NY: Greenwillow.
- Woodson, J. (2002). *Our Gracie aunt*. (J.J. Muth, Illus.). New York, NY: Hyperion.
- Woodson, J. (2002). *Visiting day*. (J.E. Ransome, Illus.). New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Yolen, J. (1996). *Encounter*. (D. Shannon, Illus.). San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace.
- Zinn, H. (2007). *A young people's history of the United States: Vol. 1. Columbus to the Spanish-American War*. New York, NY: Seven Stories.